

Ribbit

A Full-Length Comedy by,

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“When I examine myself and my methods of thought, I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has meant more to me than any talent for abstract, positive thinking.”

– Albert Einstein

“Someday you will be old enough to start reading fairy tales again.”

– C. S. Lewis

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Ribbit

Characters: (Five roles: Three women and two men)

Jules Peters: A seventeen-year-old teenager with a unique quirk.

Bea Peters: Jules' sixty-seven-year-old grandmother. She thinks the quirk's a problem.

Dr. Henry Latcham: A fifty-five-year-old psychiatrist trying to understand the quirk.

Woman's Voice: Self-explanatory... however, should be a live voice, not recorded.

Luke Porter: A seventeen-year-old teenager with a quirk of his own.

Setting: A high school teenager's "kiddie" bedroom and a doctor's office.

Time: A few days in the Digital Age.

Act One/Scene One

Scene One: Enough is enough.

(At rise, JULES is sitting on her bed in her bedroom which occupies half the stage. The other half of the stage is a psychiatrist's office. At rise, the office is dark. Lights are focused on the bedroom. However, the bedroom doesn't resemble a stereotypical-normal teenage girl's bedroom, but rather, a stereotypical-normal five-year-old girl's bedroom. There are posters of unicorns and fairies all over the walls and there's an oversized castle-dollhouse on the ground, near the bed. JULES holds a frog in her hand and is holding it up to her lips and about to kiss it when BEA walks in...)

BEA

I'm going to the store and I just wanted to see if the birthday girl...

(JULES immediately hides the frog behind her back.)

BEA *(Cont'd)*

What was that?

JULES

What was what?

BEA

What's in your hand?

JULES

Don't you knock?!

(A beat)

BEA

Ugghh.

(BEA quickly exits the room and knocks on the door. JULES tries unsuccessfully to hide the frog under her bed.)

JULES *(Faux-innocent)*

Who is it?

(BEA quickly enters the room again. JULES is still left with the frog in her hands behind her back.)

BEA

You know good and well who it is.

JULES

What do you want, grandma?

BEA

What's in your hand?

JULES

Huh?

(Frog ribbits. JULES covers her mouth.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*

Excuse me.

BEA *(Sighs)*

Show me what's in your hand.

(JULES holds out one empty hand.)

BEA *(Cont'd)*

Your other hand.

(JULES puts the hand back behind her hand and then shows the other empty hand. BEA sighs.)

BEA *(Cont'd)*

Show me both hands.

(A beat. BEA knows what JULES is contemplating. Before her granddaughter gets the chance...)

BEA (*Cont'd*)

At the same time.

(A long moment with both headstrong women simply staring each other down. Finally, JULES sighs in surrender and relinquishes her other hand. It's empty too. JULES is just as surprised as her grandmother.)

BEA (*Cont'd*)

WHERE'D HE GO?!

JULES (*Looking around*)

Good question.

(BEA quickly crosses over and climbs up on JULES' bed as quickly as her tired bones will allow. JULES can't help but grin and even slightly giggle.)

JULES (*Cont'd*)

Grandma, what are you doin'?

BEA

I DON'T WANT THAT THING JUMPIN' ON ME!

JULES

He's housebroken.

BEA (*Trying to calm down*)

Jules... darling... this has got to stop.

JULES

What's got to stop?

(Frog ribbits. JULES covers her mouth again.)

JULES (*Cont'd*)

Pardon me! Sorry, but that chili you made just ain't sittin'—

BEA

IT'S GOTTA STOP!

JULES

The chili or your cookin' in general?

BEA

THE FROG!

JULES

Frog chili? No wonder it's backin' up on m—

BEA

Jules, I'm serious. This frog business of yours is not health—

JULES (*Sighs*)

Grandma... I don't do drugs.

BEA

I know, but—

JULES

I don't drink.

BEA

Yeah, but—

JULES

I don't even have promiscuous sex.

BEA

I pray for you to start every day.

JULES

Grandma?!

BEA

Sorry, but I'd take a teen pregnancy over this any day of the—

JULES

What's wrong with—

BEA

JULES?! YOU'RE ABOUT TO KISS A FROG!!

JULES

And?

BEA

And that's not normal!

JULES

Yeah-huh. Lots of girls my age are doin' it.

BEA

They are?

(A long pause)

JULES

No. But they don't know what they're missin'. One day they'll finally figure it out.

BEA

What could possibly make you think other seventeen-year-old girls will one day start kissing frogs too?

JULES

Peer pressure.

BEA

I think all this toad licking is not only making you high, it's makin' you delusional.

JULES

I told you I don't have a drug problem. For your information, I do not lick toads... I kiss frogs.

BEA

What's the difference?

JULES

Less carbs.

BEA

Look, I don't care what you say, kissing frogs is not normal and it's got to stop.

JULES

You can't make me.

BEA *(Sighs)*

I don't want to *make you*.

JULES

Yes you do.

BEA

No, I want you to want to stop.

JULES

Fine. Then I want to stop.

BEA

It's not polite to lie to your grandmother.

JULES

That sweater makes you look fat.

BEA

JULES?!

JULES

You told me not to lie!

BEA

I meant about wanting to stop kissing frogs.

JULES

Oh. Then no. I don't really want to stop.

BEA

Jules, you're practically an adult. Don't you think you need to go back to actin' like one again?

JULES

I'm gettin' all mixed-up, what am I not supposed to lie about?

(A long silence)

BEA

Listen to me, sweetheart. You're much too old to all of a sudden start believing in—

JULES

Don't you dare say that!

BEA

Why not?

JULES

Because you know what I believe.

BEA

All of a sudden... you believe in fairy tales!

JULES

And you believe in Bigfoot!

BEA

I have proof of Bigfoot. I met the man who took his photo.

JULES (*Sighs*)

You told me.

BEA

He seemed like a very honest man. Like he could never tell a lie.

JULES

And then he talked you into buyin' that time share in Wyoming.

BEA (*Correcting her*)

Only one in the state.

JULES

Yeah! For good reason!

BEA

Such an honest face.

JULES

He stole your furniture!

BEA

No he didn't. (*A beat*) He's getting it all re-upholstered.

JULES

And you seriously think that takes five years.

(*A beat*)

BEA

They're being hand-stitched.

JULES

By who? Three-year-olds?

BEA

Well, you know how young they start puttin' 'em to work over in Mongolia.

JULES

So that's where he fled to?

BEA

He said workers in non-extradition countries try harder.

JULES

Yeah, to escape! (*A beat. JULES shakes her head.*) Fine. Whatever. Forget it. Believe whatever you want. The point is, you have your thing, so why can't I have mine?

BEA

Because it's not the same thing.

JULES

You can't make me stop believing.

BEA

Nothing is ever gonna happen! (*A beat*) Except maybe you'll get a disease.

JULES

Oh, please.

BEA

Frogs are disgusting breeders of all sorts of diseases.

JULES

Oscar does not have a disease.

BEA

Oh... no.

JULES

What?

BEA (*Meekly*)

You named him.

JULES

Of course I named him. (*A beat*) I name all of them.

BEA

ALL OF THEM?!

JULES

It's what makes each and every one of them unique and special.

BEA

I didn't know there was more than just... *him*.

JULES

His name is Osc—

BEA
HOW MANY?!

JULES
Huh?

BEA
HOW MANY FROGS?!

JULES
Today?

BEA
TOTAL!

JULES
Oh. (*A beat*) 365.

BEA
You know the exact number?

JULES
Duh. Don't you remember? Today's the one year anniversary. I started at my Sweet Sixteen Party.

BEA
Yeah... I remember... that clown I hired still keeps sending me death threats... and therapy bills.

JULES
So then why—

BEA
I thought it's just been the same frog over and over again every day.

JULES
That doesn't make any sense.

BEA
NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE! (*A beat*) But... but why doesn't that make any sense in particular?

JULES
Well, if he didn't turn into a prince yesterday, what makes you think he'll turn into one today?

BEA

What makes you?

JULES

It's my birthday... I'm feelin' lucky.

BEA

Well, when it still doesn't work, what will you think tomorrow?

JULES

Birthdays are bad luck.

BEA

Don't you think kissing a frog a day for a year with no results is long enough? (*JULES shakes her head. BEA sighs.*) Then how long do you plan to keep doing this?

JULES

I'm not sure... what's 365 times a million?

BEA

WHAT?!

JULES

She's gonna kill me.

BEA

I'm not gonna kill you, but I think—

JULES

No, not you. Mrs. Dickerson.

BEA

Who?

JULES

My Algebra teacher. 365 times a million. I should know that. Seems like an easy one... if I take—

BEA

JULES?!

JULES

I'm thinking...

BEA

Please stop thinking and just listen to me... you're my flesh and blood and I love you dearly, my darling... but I want you to know... and I mean this from the bottom of my heart... you are seriously screwed up in the head.

JULES

I want my Prince Charming.

BEA (*Viciously*)

Then go out there and find him.

JULES

I look for him every day.

BEA

You do?

JULES

Sure. And Oscar might be the one. (*BEA sighs*) And even if he's not, one of these days—

BEA

One of these days, nothing! They're all gonna still just be frogs! That's all they ever will be! No frog you kiss is ever going to be anything other than a disgusting, hideous creature.

JULES

One of these days you'll see.

BEA

No! I won't! (*A long pause*) And the sad thing is neither will you.

JULES

Then I'll just keep trying.

BEA

Jules, you're not three years old anymore.

JULES

Does that mean I can quit my sewing job in Mongolia?

(*A long silence*)

BEA

When did you suddenly decide to no longer grow up?

JULES

I didn't. I'm still growing up. But does that mean I have to stop believing in fairy tales?

BEA

YES!

JULES

Says who?

BEA

Doctor Phil.

JULES *(Sighs)*

You're the only person on the planet that listens to what he says.

BEA *(Scoffs)*

Yeah right. *(A beat)* Then how come he's got such a big following?

JULES

Stay at home moms on drugs.

BEA

Be serious, would you?

JULES

Fine, alcohol then.

BEA

You know that's not true.

JULES

You'd be surprised what desperate housewives do with that much alone time. Didn't you say you had to replace your washing machine practically every other month when you were growin' up?

BEA

What's that got to do with anything?

(JULES crosses over and whispers in BEA'S ear.)

BEA *(Horried)*

EEEEWWW! *(JULES nods and winks. BEA shakes her head.)* You kids today have the filthiest minds. We never thought that way when I was a young girl.

JULES

So you're a late bloomer?

BEA

What?

JULES

Grandma, ten seconds ago you wished I was pregnant.

BEA

BUT NOT WITH A TOAD-BABY! *(A long silence. BEA sighs.)* Look, the point is Dr. Phil's not the only person who would think what you've started doing is completely nuts. He's only one of them.

JULES

One of who?

BEA

EVERYONE ELSE!

JULES

Well, too bad 'cause I will always believe, grandma... ALWAYS!

BEA

We'll just see about that.

(BEA turns and quickly exits the bedroom and heads offstage. JULES calls after her.)

JULES

WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?!

(A beat. BEA is gone and JULES is left without an answer to her question. After a few moments with her staring offstage in the direction BEA went, JULES climbs down off the bed then looks underneath it.)

JULES

There you are, baby. It's okay. You can come out now. It's safe. She's gone. Good job hidin' like that, Oscar. I'm proud of you, my little amphibian angel. Now come on out here and give me a great... big... smoochie-woochie.

(JULES reaches her hand under the bed and slowly removes it holding the frog in her hand again. She slowly and gently lifts the frog to her lips and is about to kiss him when BEA enters the room again and grabs hold of JULES' arm and spins her around. This causes JULES to accidentally let go of OSCAR and send him flying out the bedroom door and then offstage.)

JULES
OSCAR!!NO!!

(A beat. JULES and BEA stare each other down.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*
Why would you do that, grandma?

BEA
Because you're a sick, little girl and you need help.

JULES
You mighta killed him.

BEA
I don't care.

JULES
But he could have been the one.

BEA
No, he couldn't have.

JULES
Could have.

BEA
No.

JULES
It's possible.

BEA
No it's not. And the fact that you honestly believe he could have magically turned into some sort of prince is proof positive that you need serious help.

JULES
No, I need to go and find him.

BEA
No, you need to come with me.

JULES
But what if he's hurt?

BEA

Not important.

JULES

What if he needs mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?

BEA

You've already done way too much of that kinky, perverted nonsense already.

JULES (*Teasing*)

And it ain't just been no kissin' neither.

BEA

What?

JULES

This one time, I shoved one of 'em under my dress and he—

(BEA quickly covers her hands over her ears.)

BEA

AL-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA-LA!

JULES

Relax, grandma, I'm just messin' with 'cha.

(BEA uncovers her ears.)

BEA

What?

JULES (*Not letting up*)

I said, fine then, this time you can be the one to kiss him. (*A beat*) You know you want to.

BEA

You. Wish.

JULES

Come on, grandma, there's no reason you have to keep fightin' the urge. I can see it in your eyes. You can trust me, you know I can keep a secret. I never told a soul about—

BEA

DON'T YOU DARE BRING MARVIN INTO ALL THIS?!

(A beat)

JULES

Who?

(A beat)

BEA

What? Wait. You weren't going to... *(JULES shakes her head.)* What're you talkin' about then?

JULES

That you stole your recipe for homemade fudge from Aunt Gladis. *(A beat)* Who's Marvin?

BEA

Forget it. Not important. And I did not steal that recipe from your Aunt... I just stole it back. Thieving little—

(JULES grins widely.)

BEA *(Cont'd)*

Stop it. It's not funny.

JULES

Just admit he's a little sexy.

BEA

Who? Marv—

JULES

Oscar.

BEA

NEVER!

JULES

Cute, then.

BEA

NO!

JULES

How 'bout, "You know for an itty-bitty, little frog, he's certainly got a huge—

BEA

JULES!!!

JULES (*Chuckles*)

Geez, grandma, you need to lighten up.

BEA

No, you need to take this more seriously.

JULES

I understand why you might be hesitant to tell Oscar he's sexy.

BEA

FROGS ARE NOT SEX—What? Why? Why would I hesitate?

JULES

Jealousy.

BEA (*Scoffs*)

You think I'm jealous of your disgusting, little frog?

JULES

Not you. Cecile.

BEA

I thought his name was Oscar?

JULES

His name is Oscar.

BEA

Then who the heck's Cecile? (*Looking around*) Another one?

JULES

Not another one of mine...

BEA

What do you mean?

JULES (*Nods*)

That's why I all of a sudden get why you're makin' such a fuss about Oscar... Cecile might get jealous, right? I mean, after all, he's the one who's been livin' under your bed for like... I don't know... gotta be close to 365 days... give or take. (*A beat*) Right?

(*A long silence*)

BEA

You're joking.

(A beat)

JULES
Am I?

BEA
You better be.

JULES
Did you two have a lover's spat?

BEA
SHUT UP!

JULES
I will when you calm down and take a chill-pill, grandma.

BEA (*Shakes her head*)
Take a ch... look, I'll relax when this whole mess is behind us... (*A long silence. BEA sighs.*) So let's get goin'.

JULES
Where?

BEA
Oh... you'll see.

(A beat)

JULES
Can Oscar come? (*BEA glares at her granddaughter. To clarify...*) He doesn't get car sick anymore... that was a one-time deal and afterwards... I cleaned it all up and even washed the whole car from top to—

(*YANK! BEA exits, dragging JULES along with her as the lights slowly fade. End of Act One/Scene One.*)

Act One/Scene Two

Scene Two: The hired help

(*The psychiatrist's office on the opposite side of the stage is now lit and the bedroom is dark. DR. HENRY LATCHAM is sitting behind a desk. After a few moments an intercom on it buzzes. He pushes a button.*)

LATCHAM

Yes?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Bea Peters and her granddaughter are here to see you, doctor.

LATCHAM

Very good. *(A beat)* Who?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Bea Peters and her granddaughter...

BEA'S VOICE *(Sotto, in the background)*

Jules.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Jules.

LATCHAM

Never heard of 'em.

WOMAN'S VOICE

That doesn't stop them from being here to see you, doctor.

LATCHAM *(Sighs)*

Do they have an appointment?

WOMAN'S VOICE

No doctor, but she says it's an emergency.

LATCHAM

Then tell her to go to the hospital.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I did, but she said she has to see you instead.

LATCHAM

Then tell her to make an appointment and I'll see her in six weeks.

WOMAN'S VOICE

She said she guarantees once you hear her granddaughter's condition you'll want to see her right away.

LATCHAM

Come on, Grace. You know that's not how I operate.

WOMAN'S VOICE

I know doctor, but—

LATCHAM

I run a very professional operation and you can't just walk in off the street and—

WOMAN'S VOICE

But this woman's granddaughter is really screwed up! (*A beat*) Sorry, Mrs. Peters.

BEA'S VOICE

That's alright, it's true. She's really, really screwed up.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Seriously, doctor, she's like... Picasso-painting-screwed-up.

LATCHAM

Grace, everyone that walks in that door is Picasso-painting-screwed-up. Remember Johnny Donaldson from yesterday. You know, the guy who thinks—

WOMAN'S VOICE

Doctor Latcham!

LATCHAM

What?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Doctor patient confidentiality.

LATCHAM

Whoops! (*A beat*) I honestly don't know why I keep forgetting that... thank you, Grace.

WOMAN'S VOICE

That's what I'm here for.

LATCHAM

What would I do without you?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Lose your license. Go to jail. Have no one to turn to when it's late and you're sad and lonely and feel the burning desire to fondle my—

LATCHAM

GRACE! (*A beat. Then, almost as a side note...*) What ever happened to doctor secretary confidentiality?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Ask your cousin.

LATCHAM

That was cold.

WOMAN'S VOICE

So's she.

LATCHAM

Valid point. Now then, where were we?

WOMAN'S VOICE

You were about to ask me again why you should possibly see two strangers right now.

LATCHAM

The grandmother and the Picasso painting?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Yeah.

LATCHAM

Are they still there?

WOMAN'S VOICE

They're standing right next to me.

LATCHAM

While I'm in here calling 'em Picasso-painting-screwed-up?!

WOMAN'S VOICE

Doctor, it's not like that's a spoiler alert. They know it all too well themselves. Why else would they be here in the first place?

LATCHAM

Yes, I understand that, but... it's still very unprofessional for me to say it.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Not as unprofessional as talking about your patients, doctor.

LATCHAM

I haven't done that yet.

WOMAN'S VOICE

How much closer you wanna get?

LATCHAM

Is that a challenge?

WOMAN'S VOICE

NO!

LATCHAM

Relax, Grace. I'm kidding. I'm just glad you're here to stop me from going any further in the first place.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Glad enough to give me a raise?

(A beat)

LATCHAM

What's wrong with Picasso?

WOMAN'S VOICE

She kisses frogs.

LATCHAM

That doesn't seem so Picasso-painting-screwed-up. *(A beat. Then, under his breath...)* Unless her lips are on the side of her face. *(A beat)* Licking toads is a common way kids can get the effects of drugs without—

WOMAN'S VOICE

No doctor, not lick toads. Kiss frogs. Like a fairy tale.

LATCHAM

It's very common for little girls to believe in fairy tales and castles and Prince Charmin—

WOMAN'S VOICE

The girl is six—

BEA'S VOICE

Seven—

LATCHAM

See, like I was saying, it's very common for a little seven year—

WOMAN'S VOICE

Teen.

LATCHAM

What?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Seven... teen.

(A beat)

LATCHAM

Send her in.

(A beat. LATCHAM starts to get prepared to greet a new patient but before he has much of a chance, BEA and JULES are in the office.)

BEA

Dr. Latcham?

LATCHAM

Yes, uh... hello. I'm sorry, I—

BEA

Don't worry about it, doctor. I know Jules' is Picasso-painting-screwed-up, that's why I had to bring her to you.

LATCHAM

You were referred?

BEA

You come highly recommended.

LATCHAM

Oh, yeah?!

BEA

No, I just looked in the phone book.

LATCHAM

Oh.

BEA

Sorry.

LATCHAM

No apology necessary.

BEA

I'm Bea Peters. And this is my granddaughter—

LATCHAM

Jules?

BEA

Correct.

LATCHAM

Jules. I'm Dr. Latcham. Nice to meet you. Please sit down.

JULES

I don't want to be here.

LATCHAM

I understand. Not many people that walk through that door actually want to be here.

BEA

Really?

LATCHAM

Some do. Some are court ordered. Some are tricked. Some lost a bet. And some are dragged here unwillingly by their grandmothers.

(BEA looks hostile.)

LATCHAM *(Cont'd)*

I'm sorry, ma'am. That was a bad joke.

BEA

Why do you think I didn't laugh?

LATCHAM

Ouch.

BEA

What? You're the only one who can make a joke?

LATCHAM

No. I'm sorry, you're right. I just didn't know you were making a bad joke too.

BEA

Who says mine was bad?

LATCHAM

Double ouch.

JULES (*Sighs*)

Do you two want to be left alone?

LATCHAM

No, you're right, Jules. I'm sorry. So what do you think the problem is?

JULES

The problem is she just doesn't understand and she never will.

BEA

No one would and no one should have to deal with this on a daily basis.

JULES

If you stayed out of my business, you wouldn't have to deal with it.

BEA

It's hard to ignore all those frogs all over the house.

LATCHAM

You keep the frogs inside?

JULES

Only one a day.

LATCHAM

You limit yourself?

JULES

Everything in moderation.

LATCHAM

That's good advice.

JULES

But nothing succeeds like excess.

LATCHAM

Even better.

BEA

Excuse me?

LATCHAM (*Ignoring BEA*)

Please sit down, Jules... Jules? Is that short for—

JULES

Jules. (*LATCHAM nods, then gestures to the chair. JULES sighs.*) Fine. (*JULES sits.*) But I'll bet you both a dollar this turns out to be a huge waste of time.

(*JULES sits down in front of DR. LATCHAM.*)

LATCHAM

You don't think I'll be able to help you?

JULES

No offense towards you. I'm sure you're a fine headshrinker. It's just that I don't think I have anything that needs to be "cured" and there is nothing you can say that will make me want to stop kissing frogs.

LATCHAM

Duly noted.

(*JULES sits. LATCHAM looks up at BEA.*)

LATCHAM

Would you care to wait outside?

BEA

Can I stay here?

LATCHAM

That's entirely up to Jules.

JULES

No chance in hell.

BEA

JULES!

JULES

No chance in heck.

BEA

But—

JULES

No, grandma. No.

BEA

I just want to—

JULES

I know what you want, but if I'm going to be forced to do this, it's gotta be my way.

BEA

But how is that going to help me know if this is worth the money?

JULES

I'll tell you right now it's not worth the money. This is a bigger waste of money than your Botox.

BEA

How can you say something that hurtful to your own grandmother without batting an eye?

JULES

You told me not to lie to you anymo—

BEA

Not about my appearance!

JULES

Fine. (*A beat*) I love that sweater.

BEA

You do? Thanks! You know I got this on sale at—(*It dawns on BEA. She sighs.*) How can you be so cruel?

JULES

You dragged me here, didn't you?

BEA

Yeah, exactly, so why should I have to wait outside?

JULES

Because, Grandma. The doctor and I are going to have a private conversation and then I'll fill you in on the details afterwards. The ones I want to share. And then Doctor Latcham will tell the whole world about the rest of our conversation.

LATCHAM

I don't know why I keep coming close to doing that. But luckily, Grace is out there to remind me not to do it before I slip up every time.

JULES

Doctor? No offense, but that's not very professional, nor is it a fool-proof plan.

LATCHAM

I'm trying to catch myself too.

JULES

Like I said.

BEA

JULES?!

JULES (*Sighs*)

Whatever. Look, it doesn't really matter to me anyways, doc, I'm not ashamed of what I do.

BEA

And yet another problem within the problem.

JULES

This is precisely why you can't stay in here for this conversation, grandma.

BEA

I'm only trying to help.

JULES

That's what the violin players said on the Titanic. (*A beat*) Look, I don't need anybody's help. Not even yours, Doctor.

LATCHAM

I understand.

JULES

Good. Now if you wouldn't mind, grandma, the doctor and I are going to have a conversation in private. And then, like I said, after I leave he'll tell you and everyone else about it.

LATCHAM

Not necessarily.

JULES

So what's up with Johnny Donaldson?

LATCHAM

Oh, boy. Where do I begin? That guy thinks—

(The intercom buzzes a multitude of times. LATCHAM looks over at it. It keeps buzzing.)

LATCHAM

Please excuse me for one second.

BEA

Of course, doctor.

(JULES nods silently. LATCHAM stands, crosses over to the desk and pushes a button.)

LATCHAM

Yes?

WOMAN'S VOICE

STOP IT!

LATCHAM

Right, right.

(LATCHAM quickly returns to his chair.)

LATCHAM *(Cont'd)*

See? What would I do without her? Now where was I?

JULES

Johnny Donaldson.

LATCHAM

Oh, right. That guy is seriously—

(The intercom starts constantly buzzing again. LATCHAM looks at it but doesn't get up this time. The intercom keeps buzzing.)

LATCHAM

RIGHT! SORRY!

(Beat. Then the intercom buzzing stops. LATCHAM turns back to face JULES.)

LATCHAM *(Cont'd)*

You're good.

(JULES shrugs. BEA looks around the office.)

BEA

Are we being recorded?

LATCHAM

What? Of course not. What on earth would make you think something like—

BEA

How did she know you were about to talk about your other patient?

(A beat)

LATCHAM

She gets me.

BEA

That's it? That's your answer? She gets you?

LATCHAM

You know, I actually never asked her how she does it. Maybe it's like seeing a magic act.

BEA

Huh?

LATCHAM

You know, you want to know how the magician does it... but you don't really want to know.

BEA

Your secretary's a magician?

LATCHAM

I think so. I mean, I have seen her rabbit.

JULES

Ew.

LATCHAM

I meant that literally.

BEA

Please excuse my granddaughter, not only does she kiss frogs, but she's also got a filthy mind.

JULES *(Shrugs)*

I just don't like rabbits.

(A beat)

BEA

Oh.

JULES

I guess that means you're the one with the—

BEA (*Quickly back to LATCHAM*)

So she's a magician and a secretary, huh?

LATCHAM (*Shrugs*)

Or maybe she's psychic.

JULES

Or maybe she's bugging your office.

(*LATCHAM throws his hands in the air.*)

LATCHAM

I WANNA PAY NO ATTENTION TO THE MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN!

(*A long silence*)

BEA

Maybe the phone book's not the best way to pick a psychiatrist.

LATCHAM

Nonsense. (*A beat*) That's how I found mine.

BEA

Yours? You see a psychiatrist too?

LATCHAM (*Scoffs*)

You try dealin' with these whack-jobs without lithium.

BEA

That's not a very professional thing to say, doctor.

LATCHAM

Sorry. It's one of the side effects.

BEA

What is?

LATCHAM

Loss of... tact.

BEA

No it's not.

LATCHAM

Test me.

BEA (*Sighs*)

I'm not gonna—

JULES

I will! What do you think of my grandma's sweater?

(LATCHAM pantomimes inflating like a big, fat balloon.)

JULES (*Cont'd*)

HA! You passed, doc! Flying col—

BEA

Come on, Jules, we're leaving.

JULES

No, you're leaving.

BEA

Excuse me?

JULES

This quack rocks! No way I'm leaving before he tells me about Johnny Donaldson.

LATCHAM

Johnny Donaldson? Oh, that guy's really screwed up. Just yesterday, he—

(Intercom buzzes once. That's all it takes at this point.)

LATCHAM (*Cont'd*)

That woman's got skills.

JULES

I was thinkin' the exact same thing, doc. Abra-freakin'-cadabra!

(A long silence. Finally, JULES turns back to face BEA again.)

JULES (*Cont'd*)

Any time, grandma. Then we can actually get started.

(A long silence. Finally...)

BEA (*Sighs*)

Fine. But in case you change your mind, I'll be right—

JULES

Goodbye, grandma.

(BEA thinks about speaking again but doesn't. Instead, she silently heads for the door to the office. She takes one last look back at LATCHAM and JULES and then exits. LATCHAM looks back at JULES.)

LATCHAM

So...

JULES

So...

LATCHAM

How long have you been doing this?

JULES

Kissing frogs?

LATCHAM

Yes.

JULES

I started one year ago today, actually.

LATCHAM

Don't you think sixteen seems a little old for you to start believing in frogs and princes?

JULES

It's never too late for frogs and princes.

LATCHAM

And what do you expect to accomplish by doing this?

JULES

I expect all my dreams to come true just like in all the Disney films.

LATCHAM

But you don't believe those films are based on reality do you?

JULES

Well, I only started watching them all last year, but now—

LATCHAM

Really?

JULES

Yeah.

LATCHAM

Then what'd you watch when you were younger?

(A beat)

JULES

I don't remember.

LATCHAM

But you do know what fairy tale means, right?

JULES

Tinkerbell's got a birth defect?

LATCHAM

That's not an answer to my question.

JULES

Sure it is. In a roundabout way.

LATCHAM

Jules?

JULES

You mean do I know the difference between fact and fiction?

LATCHAM

Yes.

JULES *(Sighs)*

Yes.

LATCHAM

But then you must know that—

JULES

I know what I believe in. And what I believe in is real.

LATCHAM

You want your Prince Charming.

JULES

I want people to leave me alone.

LATCHAM

And by people you mean your grandmother.

JULES

Well...

LATCHAM

Well, what?

JULES

You've met her.

LATCHAM

Yes I have.

JULES

So?

LATCHAM

Fair enough.

JULES

Thank you.

LATCHAM

Well, she did bring you to see me, so that must mean—

JULES

It means she's completely out of options.

LATCHAM

Thanks.

JULES

I tell it like it is.

(A beat)

LATCHAM

So... do you think you might, at least in part, be doin' this in an attempt to, in a matter of speaking, I don't know... sort of... uh... drive her... uh... well...

JULES

Crazy?

LATCHAM

Thank you for finishing that sentence. I'm not supposed to say words like that.

JULES

What? Crazy? Fruit loops? Cuckoo? Batty? Insane? Bonkers? Bananas? Delir—

LATCHAM

Exactly.

(JULES starts laughing.)

LATCHAM *(Cont'd)*

What's so funny?

JULES

You just called your patients whack-jobs!

LATCHAM

I slipped up.

JULES

And this time?

LATCHAM

I didn't.

JULES

Otherwise you would have said?...

LATCHAM

Crazy. *(JULES smiles)* DAMN IT!

(JULES laughs harder.)

LATCHAM

What now?

JULES

Well, you're also ready to break the doctor patient confidentiality every five seconds.

(A long pause)

LATCHAM *(Smiles)*

You didn't really think I'd actually do that, did you?

(A beat)

JULES

Johnny Donaldson?

LATCHAM

Who?

JULES

Then why do you always act like you're about to?

LATCHAM

I like to break the ice. *(A long pause)* So... do you?

JULES

Do I what? Like breakin'—

LATCHAM

Do you think you might be kissing frogs to drive your grandmother nuttier than Kung Pao Chicken?

JULES

I never thought of that before... *(A beat)* *But I like it!*

LATCHAM

Hold on a sec, if that's not why you've been doing it, then by no means do I want you to start—

JULES

I LIKE IT A LOT!

LATCHAM

Jules...

JULES

In fact, I don't like the idea... I LOVE IT!

LATCHAM

No you don't.

JULES

Oh, yes I do.

LATCHAM

Forget I said it.

JULES

Like that's possible.

LATCHAM

No, I'm serious, Jules, you do not have to start—

JULES

Messin' with grandma?

LATCHAM

Yes.

JULES

Oh, yes I do.

LATCHAM

Oh, no you don't.

JULES

I do. I do.

LATCHAM

You don't. You don't.

JULES

But it's a great idea!

LATCHAM

No, it's a terrible idea.

JULES

It's genius.

LATCHAM

Forget I said anything.

JULES
Okay.

LATCHAM
Really?

JULES
HELL NO!

LATCHAM
I take it back.

JULES (*Giggles*)
You can't take it back!

LATCHAM
I want this conversation to go in a new direction.

JULES
After planting a nugget like that in my brain? Good luck!

LATCHAM
Please? (*A beat*) Pretty please?

JULES
You didn't say with sugar on top.

LATCHAM
I'm diabetic.

JULES
But I'm not!

LATCHAM (*Sighs*)
Pretty please with sugar—

JULES
Do you beg all your patients?

LATCHAM
Not all.

JULES
But most?

LATCHAM

Well, most is a very subjective term, don't you think?

JULES

How many patients do you have?

LATCHAM

Sixty four.

JULES

And how many have you begged?

LATCHAM

Fifty eight.

JULES

No.

LATCHAM

Fifty nine.

JULES

I wasn't disagreeing with you doc, I was merely saying no, I don't think most is a very subjective—fifty nine?

LATCHAM

Sixty.

JULES

Is that including me?

LATCHAM

Sixty one.

JULES

Wow. *(A long pause)* Do you always beg them all not to follow your advice?

LATCHAM

Of course not. I've helped a lot of people through a lot of problems and I've been successful in many, many situations. *(A beat)* It's just that every once and a while, it seems like I say something that makes people take it as a plan of attack rather than a question. *(A beat)* Like you.

JULES

So you beg?

LATCHAM

Yes.

JULES

What do you do when that doesn't work?

LATCHAM

I'll give you fifty bucks to forget about tryin' to drive your grandmother crazy.

JULES

You bribe?

LATCHAM

When they seem as determined as you are right now... yes.

JULES

Doc, I've been kissing a frog a day for a whole year. Don't that tell you I've been pretty determined about this thing for quite some time?

(A long pause)

LATCHAM

A hundred bucks.

JULES

Sorry doc, not gonna happen.

LATCHAM

Two hundred.

JULES

What's the highest you're prepared to offer?

LATCHAM

What's the lowest you'll accept?

JULES

I asked you first.

LATCHAM

I'm prepared to go as high as a thousand.

JULES

Nope.

LATCHAM

Two thousand.

JULES

I thought a thousand was the highest you were—

LATCHAM

Three.

JULES

You suck at negotiating.

LATCHAM

Yeah, I learned that in the divorce.

JULES

Well, don't feel too bad.

LATCHAM

I only cry myself to sleep on the weekends now.

JULES

That's not what I—God, how much did she get?

(LATCHAM leans forward and whispers in JULES' ear.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*

Yikes! Now I'm gonna start cryin'. *(A beat. LATCHAM nods and wipes a tear away from an eye.)* I'm sorry, doc... but that's not why I told you not to feel too bad. I don't want you to feel bad, 'cause even if you had offered me a million, I still would have turned you down.

LATCHAM

A million?! *(A beat)* Okay, well, I guess I can shuffle some things around and my daughter can defer her college enrollment for a year or two... personally, I think community college gets a bum rap as it is anyway, and then I could—

JULES

I said I would HAVE still turned you down.

LATCHAM

Oh.

(A beat)

JULES

Wow, doc, I had no idea how serious you were about me not acting on your plan of attack.

LATCHAM

IT WAS JUST A QUESTION!

JULES

So be it.

LATCHAM

Does... does that mean you're not gonna do it?

JULES

Uhhhhhhh... no.

LATCHAM

No, Jules, listen... I don't want you to start messing with your grandma just because—

JULES

I'm afraid it's too late.

LATCHAM

No it's not!

JULES

Sorry, doc, but I think it is. You planted the seed and now I'm gonna make sure it grows.

LATCHAM

Your grandmother is going to kill me.

JULES

Grandma's gonna be too busy goin' outta her mind to worry about you or anything else for that matter.

LATCHAM

Come on, Jules... you don't really want to mess with your grandma any worse than you already...

JULES

What was that?

LATCHAM

Uhhhh...

JULES

That's what I thought.

LATCHAM (*Sighs*)

You're gonna be quite a handful, aren't you?

JULES

Not really. I just have that one thing.

LATCHAM

That one thing is quite a big thing!

JULES

It's not that big.

LATCHAM

It's huge!

JULES

Compared to what?

LATCHAM

Asia?

JULES

Oh, so now, kissing frogs is a huge problem?

LATCHAM

For a seventeen year old girl?!

JULES

Yes.

LATCHAM

Yes.

JULES

Five seconds ago you said—

LATCHAM

It was five-Mississippi seconds.

JULES

So now you think I should stop too?

LATCHAM

I didn't say that... but... but... could you stop?

JULES

I think so.

LATCHAM

But you're not sure?

JULES

If I wanted to, I could. (*A beat*) I think.

LATCHAM

Really?

JULES

What are you getting at, doc?

LATCHAM

I'm trying to see if it's a decision or an addiction.

JULES

Decision.

LATCHAM

How can you be so sure?

JULES

I decided.

LATCHAM

But you do it every day.

JULES

You shave every day. Is shaving an addiction? Or bathing? Or breathing?

LATCHAM

No.

JULES

So there you go.

(A long pause)

LATCHAM

I hope you don't mind, but I'm just gonna take a few notes.

JULES
What's the point?

LATCHAM
I'm sorry?

JULES
I mean, it's not like I'm ever gonna see you again.

LATCHAM
You don't wanna come back?

JULES
You think that's a bad idea?

LATCHAM
Well, I think I might be able to help you if given the chance.

JULES
See, I don't.

LATCHAM
I'm not going to tell you to stop if that's what you're afraid of.

JULES
You're not?

LATCHAM
Since you're so committed... no. I'd just like to keep talking to you, that's all.

JULES
About frogs?

LATCHAM
About everything.

JULES (*Scoffs*)
Everything.

LATCHAM
What was that?

JULES
What was what?

LATCHAM

You scoffed. Why? Would talking about everything be a problem?

JULES

That all depends, doctor.

LATCHAM

On?

JULES

What you mean by everything.

LATCHAM

Fair enough. (*A beat*) Okay. Well... for instance, do you have a boyfriend?

JULES

I'm working on it.

LATCHAM

You honestly think that if you kiss enough frogs, you'll finally find a prince?

JULES

Doesn't every girl? (*A beat*) Well, except for lesbians, they kiss ponies.

LATCHAM

I see. Well... do you have any friends at all at school?

JULES

They don't get me just like grandma.

LATCHAM

Do they pick on you?

JULES

That would require them to acknowledge my existence.

LATCHAM

They don't, huh?

JULES

Not anymore. Not since... well... I guess about a year ago...

LATCHAM

Not even a Tweet?

JULES

Frogs, not birds, doc.

LATCHAM

I see. *(A beat)* I'm sorry, but I'm just gonna take a few notes, even if we don't ever see each other again. For my own sake.

JULES

Knock yourself out.

LATCHAM

Thank you.

(LATCHAM goes over to his desk and removes a large yellow legal pad and a pen. He returns to the chair in front of JULES and begins taking a few notes. Just before either one of them speaks again, the intercom on LATCHAM'S desk buzzes once more. LATCHAM goes over and pushes a button.)

LATCHAM *(Cont'd)*

We already broke the ice, Grace. No more need to—

WOMAN'S VOICE *(Whispering)*

No, doctor. I'm sorry, but she's at your door holding her ear in a glass up to it and I don't know what you want me to do about that.

LATCHAM

Tell her to stop!

WOMAN'S VOICE

I did. Three times. Then she threatened me.

LATCHAM

What'd she say?

JULES

Where'd she get the glass?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, if I knew she was gonna use it for that, I would've let her keep choking.

JULES *(Nods)*

Oh. The old "need-a-glass-of-water-before-I-choke-to-death" trick, huh? Don't feel too bad, that's how she's gotten a free meal at every restaurant she's ever eaten at since 1974.

WOMAN'S VOICE

What a sneaky—

JULES

Tell me about it. I've gotten so good at the Heimlich Maneuver, I'm thinkin' of turnin' pro.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Picasso?

JULES

Yeah?

WOMAN'S VOICE

I think you need to stick one of those frogs right up your grandmother's—

LATCHAM

GRACE?!

WOMAN'S VOICE

I'm sorry, doctor, but she's driving me—

LATCHAM

How did she threaten you?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Right, sorry... she said she might be sixty-seven years old but she still knows where to hide a body.

LATCHAM

WHOA! *(A beat)* She said that? Really?

WOMAN'S VOICE

Twice.

LATCHAM

Good Lord!

WOMAN'S VOICE

And that was after I threatened to call the cops.

LATCHAM

Oh, for the love of—

(LATCHAM takes his hand off the intercom button and approaches the door. He opens it quickly and BEA practically falls to the ground, but catches herself at the last second. BEA turns and screams towards GRACE offstage.)

BEA
YOU NARC!

(Quick blackout. End of Act One/Scene Two.)

Act One/Scene Three

(At rise, we are back in JULES' bedroom. She is sitting on her bed with another frog in her hand. She stares at him ala Hamlet/Yoric.)

JULES
Why, hello there Roscoe. How are you today? How do I look?

(There is a knock at the door.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*
Go away Grandma.

BEA *(Offstage)*
Just hear me out.

JULES
After what you did, no way.

BEA *(Offstage)*
I had to.

JULES
You had to eavesdrop on my therapy session... how exactly was that supposed to help me?

BEA *(Offstage)*
Jules, you don't understand, I'm a woman at the end of her rope.

JULES
Is that a suicide threat?

BEA
What? No.

JULES
Oh.

BEA
Is that what it would take?

JULES

It would show you were serious.

BEA

I am serious!

(BEA tries the door. It's locked.)

JULES

Trying to enter my room without permission is not showin' me you're serious, it's showin' me you're desperate.

BEA

I am desperate!

JULES

And depraved.

BEA

And loving.

JULES *(Scoffs)*

No.

BEA

But I am loving.

JULES

You're pathetic.

BEA

And you're still a sick, little girl.

JULES

I thought you were so furious about the frogs 'cause I'm NOT a little girl.

BEA

But you're still acting like one!

JULES

And you're acting like you had nothing to do with this.

(A long silence)

BEA

What?

JULES

You heard me.

BEA

What does that mean?

JULES

You know exactly what I mean.

BEA

I have no idea what you mean... *(A long pause)* Would you please let me in?

JULES *(Sighs)*

Nah.

(BEA starts another faux-choking fit outside the door.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*

Nice try, grandma.

(The choking continues unabated for a few moments. Then it instantly stops and then there is a loud GASP then a THUD heard just outside the door. A long silence. Then finally, JULES gets off the bed and unlocks and opens the bedroom door. She is still holding the frog in her other hand. She sees BEA lying on the ground just outside. Another long silence.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*

Grandma?

(BEA instantly, and surprisingly spritely, jumps to her feet. JULES rolls her eyes.)

JULES *(Cont'd)*

You better watch it, being “the grandmother who cried... corpse” is gettin’ pretty stale. And don’t forget, one day you won’t be fakin’ it.

BEA

If it’s on a day when you’re no longer kissing frogs, I’d have died happy.

JULES

Nobody dies happy!

BEA

If there are no frogs in the picture, then I’ll be the first.